

February 23, 2022

Testimony in support of DPH funding for gun violence prevention

I urge you to support the \$3.6 million allocation to the Department of Public Health for community violence prevention included in Governor's Bill 5037.

Since the Biden Administration announced the investment of \$5 billion of federal funding in community gun violence prevention, the need for the CT Initiative is more important than ever. The State of Connecticut needs to be poised to advocate for its fair share of the funds and to have the capacity to direct funding to areas of greatest need.

A community-based gun violence prevention program will not only provide funding on which communities can depend, but also support technical assistance, and improve accountability. More importantly, programs like these work! Project Longevity, a CT-based gun violence intervention strategy, has led to reduced gun violence rates in the area surrounding the program's operation. Across the United States, other gun violence models, such as hospital-based violence intervention and violence interrupters, have proven track records of reducing gun violence. More than twenty cities and states across the US have similar programs, including CA, NJ, MA, CO, and IL.

Urban centers in CT account for most of our state's homicides, nearly doubling since 2018. In addition, people of color are disproportionately impacted by gun violence. Approximately ten percent of our state's population is Black, but Black people comprise 56% of the state's gun homicide victims. (Young Black men in Connecticut are almost 39 times more likely to be murdered with a gun than white men.) Our Latinex population (14% of our state's population) disproportionately account for 23% of gun homicide victims in our state.

While law enforcement has an important role in gun violence prevention through focused deterrence strategies and enforcement of our state's strong gun laws, Connecticut needs to invest in a comprehensive portfolio of solutions that goes beyond policing.

Beyond the loss of life, gun violence has a tremendous economic cost. It's estimated that the cost to Connecticut taxpayers of all forms of gun violence is \$90 million per year. The tangible costs, including lost income, is estimated at \$430 million annually, and the societal cost brings the total to \$1.2 billion each year.

Forty-nine CT organizations support the Initiative to Prevent Community Gun Violence. Please support the \$3.6 million allocation to prevent needless and devastating gun violence. Thank you for your consideration of this request and the opportunity to provide this testimony.

Respectfully yours,

Barbara Mechler
Southbury